

Damage Assessment

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill set into motion the largest Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) in history. A NRDA is the process used by natural resource trustees to develop the public's claim for natural resource damages against the party or parties responsible for the spill and to seek compensation for the harm done to natural resources and services. It also provides for the development of a restoration plan or series of plans to restore or replace those resources.

Technical Working Groups (TWGs)

Fundamental to the NRDA process is a comprehensive assessment of a diverse range of resources. In the early days of the spill, NRDA teams began collecting data related to a wide range of natural resources and the services they provide and mobilized scores of field teams to conduct research in and around the Gulf Coast. That work continues today and will likely continue for several years.

TWGs are comprised of subject matter experts and scientists from state and federal resource agencies, universities and other institutions. They are charged with developing workplans to guide the damage assessment process and direct data collection efforts. Once samples are collected, they are sent to specific labs approved by the trustees and BP for analysis. For additional information on finalized cooperative workplans and data collected, please visit www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/gulf-spill-data.

The diagram below illustrates the various types of resources being evaluated as part of the Deepwater Horizon NRDA and provides a sense of the scope of investigations being done to fully evaluate the impacts of oil, dispersants and other response actions on the resources.

NEARSHORE SEDIMENT AND ASSOCIATED RESOURCES

Soil near the shore and the fish, shrimp, crabs and invertebrates that live in the waters from the low-tide line to the edge of the continental shelf at a depth of 656 feet are of particular concern.

SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION

Rooted vascular plants such as seagrasses and freshwater/brackish species grow in the intertidal and subtidal zones. They provide food and habitat for birds, fish, shellfish and invertebrates.

SHORELINES

Salt- and brackish marsh, tidal mudflats, mangroves and sandy beaches provide biological nurseries, storm surge protection, recreation and nutrient control.

TERRESTRIAL SPECIES

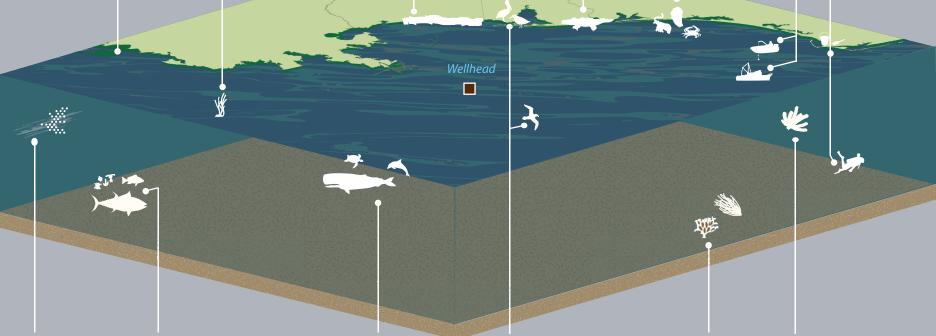
Species that use the habitats above the mean high-tide line include birds, crabs, turtles, crocodiles, alligators and small mammals.

OYSTERS

American or eastern oysters found in the Gulf are the building blocks of oyster reefs. Oysters are a valuable ecological and economic resource for the Gulf.

HUMAN USE

People rely on the bounty of the Gulf for fishing, sunbathing, bird watching and myriad other recreational activities. Tourism and recreation are major drivers of the Gulf Coast economy.



WATER COLUMN AND INVERTEBRATES

Water serves as important habitat for many species. Plankton, neuston and micronekton move through the water column, fueling the food chain and future generations.

MARINE FISH

The Gulf's diverse species include red snapper, red and black drum, anchovy, grouper, cobia, bass, menhaden, mullet, mackerel, jacks, killifish, Gulf sturgeon, whale shark, sharks, Atlantic bluefin tuna and groundfish.

MARINE MAMMALS AND SEA TURTLES

Marine mammals in the Gulf include whales, manatees, dolphins and sea turtles, many of which are threatened or endangered.

BIRDS

Many types of shorebirds, colonial seabirds, open-water Hard- and soft-bottomed (pelagic) seabirds and marsh (secretive) birds rely heavily on the Gulf Coast.

DEEPWATER COMMUNITIES

communities at depths of more than 200 feet include resources such as corals, tube worms and sponges.

SHALLOW CORALS

Healthy coral reefs provide a source of food for plants and animals. They protect coastlines from storms and erosion and provide habitat, spawning and nursery grounds for fish.













